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PHOENIX

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# Welcome Departure

Come Diwali, it is time for Akashavani Sangeet Sammelan. Started 47 years ago (1952), it is an annual cultural event, waited eagerly by musicians and music buffs all over the country. Patterned on the National Network, the varied, 46-day musical fiesta reaches the remotest corners. There is choice listening to artistes not commonly available otherwise.

One glance through the schedule severally recorded on October 9, 10 and broadcast from November 6, reveals nothing different from what has been seen in the years gone by. It is a mixed bag, some new names vying with their seasoned counterparts for recognition. As usual, the Hindustani style takes a major cut in the 70 concerts, involving more than 180 artistes, including the accompanists. Arguably, the Carnatic style which spans a smaller area has to do with fewer slots. A pattern which cannot be disputed.

But disputes there inevitably will be where the interests of Karnataka are involved. What is most disquieting is the persistent denial of the status due to it by virtue of its being the only State that patronises both the classical styles of Indian music. True, Prime Ministers down to the last central leader have recognised this phenomenon. During their visits to the State they have repeatedly declared it as the cultural capital of South India. Yet the Broadcasting House refuses to go by that dictum. This gnawing

indifference is manifest as blatantly in the allotment of invited audience sessions as in the selection of artistes from the region. In the first category Hyderabad, why even a nondescript beach like Port Blair enjoy the status on par with regional centres like Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai with four or more sessions as against the routine two assigned to Bangalore.

And in the selection of artistes, the anomaly is persisting. A State that has produced giants in the art, has to be satisfied with a mere four main artistes and an equal number of accompanists. The anomaly doesn't end there. Of this four, one each is an exponent in the Hindustani genre. Yes, only one. Imagine, a style fondly fostered by some of the unforgettable maestros like Abdul Kurnum Khan, Sawai Gandharva, Kumara Gandharva, Mallikarjun Mansur, Basavaraj Rajguru and the living legends like Gangubai Hangal and Bhimsen Joshi has to be content with a single representative. But considering the fact that the style had gone totally unrepresented in the previous one or two years, this is something for gratification. In the bargain, however, the number of artistes in the Carnatic style in either case is reduced.

As disconcerting is the treatment meted out to the emergent "Sugam Sangeet" (light music) which has more

(Contd. on P. -2)

(Contd. from P. -1)

than one national award in its kitty. That way the lyrical style is in no way inferior to Thumri or Dadra which invariably get featured in the annual year after year. But for the same AIR, despite the fact that the office of Director of Music is held by a Kannadiga, the firm is irrelevant.

But, there is one welcome departure in the schedule. And that is providing a slot for a Laya Vinayasa pertaining to the Carnatic percussion. Strangely, though the Hindustani percussion, i.e., tabala and pakhawaj have regularly been listed in the annual fete, their Carnatic counterpart was woefully neglected all along. This despite the fact that they usually enjoy an identity of their own. No Carnatic concert, vocal or instrumental, can be deemed complete without the customary sola (Fhsni) turn for the percussion, while such overtures are alien to a Hindustani concert. Even otherwise, the strides made locally in this genre of music in recent times, certainly deserves recognition. In fact, presently the percussion ensembles have become so popular that there are several groups, each comprising more than 15 or more different instruments active in the City. Yet, the AIR has regularly been encouraging Hindustani percussion solos as against the utter difference to the mridangam. Anyway, it is good a beginning is made, though the dueting between a mridangam and a dola is in conceivable! Let our hope that other such anomalies are also removed as expeditiously!

S.N. Chandrasekhar

## Going It Alone !

—Neela Ramgopal

I nodded for the umpteenth time to mean that I have understood all that I have been told. I am travelling for the first time away from India, alone to the US. I was at the Bangalore Airport, with family and friends giving me a 'send

off', I seemed to understand everything and at the same time was not sure of going about it all by myself. Some strange chemistry was on inside me. All this at an early age of 6-1!

"You should know how to carry your luggage by yourself



Neela Ramgopal

with a trolly and in foreign countries you don't get a poster" was in my ears. My husband must have been distraught at my having to go alone to those far away places. My student Anitha had told me "never get panicky". She also told me never to get into conversation with strangers. "It is better to get bored than get into trouble".

Lots of last minute instructions and advise. Nothing seemed to enter my head including "look at the monitor" for boarding and other announcements.

The lady at the check-in said "going alone, Madam! for the first time". My expression must have given me up! Next, "Did you pack your suitcase yourself?".

I said to myself "what a silly question and who else can be packing my suitcase!"

My husband standing near came to my rescue. The boarding passes Bangalore-Bombay, Bombay-London, London-Atlanta (USA) were all given and I was cautioned that I should keep them with me safely until I reach USA.

Once again some advise repeated; like, do this, do that, how to take out the luggage from the conveyer belt, look at the monitor for flight information, so on and so forth.

I pushed the hand baggage through the scanning machine and I walked through the security portal. As I passed the

heap came on and two security check women reached me in a trice. They asked me to rise my hands and a personal check monitor was used to check me. The heap came on again from around my waist.

"What is it, can you take it out?"

It was my diamond ring tied to my pallu, that had caused the heap!

While 'Stamping' the boarding pass, the security check woman asked me in a 'friendly' manner. "Why is it you are not to be seen nowadays? Where are you going? Is your son there? What is he doing, Madam?"

I remembered, "Don't talk to strangers."

I was mum. With a smile (forced) I went into the security lounge in no time to avoid any further conversation.

So many unknown faces. Now I am alone! All those who had come to see me 'off' waved "good-bye" and disappeared. I needed to manage for myself. No further advise, sweet words or words of comfort. They have all left leaving me alone!

Aha! Radhika was sitting there! At last someone known to me!

I asked her "going somewhere." "Yeah! to visit my parents in Hyderabad. About you?"

"Going to the U.S. for a holiday". I said as if it was nothing big.

Her flight was announced and she "also" went away. I was alone once again, looking at the boarding pass. Suddenly my eyebrows went up. The blind almost stopped cursing the veins. The security person had stamped my Bombay-London boarding pass instead of the Bangalore-Bombay pass. I rushed to the counter again, elbowing the people out of my way, dismayed and reaching the counter. The flight was scheduled for 6.15 p.m. And it was already 6.00 p.m.!

I was in trouble! I was panting for breath. Who knows people will be reading the news tomorrow morning about me in the "Sad demise" column. My heart started aching suddenly in the rightside because of my high tension! Suddenly I remembered that the heart is in the left side! Thank God! The lady at the counter looked at me accusingly, in a old time mother-in-law fashion. She tore away the boarding passes hurriedly, ran into the office exclaiming the P.T. Usha sprint. The time was 6.10 p.m. she reappeared fast and put two safety pins for the torn passes and asked me to show it at Bombay Airport for correction. I pulled the passes from her hands and ran towards the flight where all the passengers had already boarded.

I could hear Anitha's words!

"Don't get panicky."

*(to be concluded)*



## On The Throne of Melody

—K. Raghavendra Rao

**E**ven in a milieu of Karnatak classical music which has come to be identified with speed, pyrotechnics, mutilation of Sahitya, a machine-gun delivery of swara and as little emotional content, there are artistes who have kept music firmly established on the throne of melody. One such is Ganakalashree Sukanya Prabhakar.

Listening to her concert is a rich experience, each recital made memorable by her tonal lustre, the understanding and clear enunciation of sahitya, effortless virtuosity which plays handmaid to melody and the instinctively appropriate tempo, which make the renderings bhava-laden. No surprise her recitals draw full houses.

One such was organised by Ganabharathi, a prominent cultural organisation, at the Veena Sheshanna Bhavana on August 7, when a capacity audience listened to what was a lesson how aesthetically satisfying classical music can be.

Opening with a varna in Kannada, the artiste moved on to raga Dhanyasi. The delineation was out of the ordinary as it was in perfect alignment with the ensuing Shyama Shastri kriti "Meena Lochana". The kriti itself took on evocative hues thanks to the

slow-tempo. It is customary for vocalists to compliment the co-artistes on percussion at the end of the concert, may be as a matter of routine courtesy. But, here was an instance when the mridangist G.S.Ramannjam thanked the vocalist for having sung this piece as it should be! Of similar restraint and beauty was Thyagaraja's "Shanta-muleka" (Saama).

Sukanya has done research on the compositions of Jayarhamaraja Wadiyar, the last ruler of the erstwhile Mysore State and has submitted her thesis for Doctoral Degree to the University of Mysore. It was thus no wonder that she chose to present two krithis of Wadiyar. One was in the rare "Anruthavahini", a Janya of the 20th Melakarta Natallhairavi. It runs so close to the more popular Saramati that artistes of lesser calibre may find it difficult to establish its identity. The second composition was again in a rare raga, "Bhagavasanta", which has its parallel in Basant of Hindustani music. The artiste's development of the raga reminded this writer of the late Pandit Basavaraj Rajguru, who was very fond of this raga, which he used to render in his inimitable style. The raga has so much of "araj" (petitioning) in it and Sukanya brought out the royal composer's appeal in his

Anulhya-Devi in this Kriti.

Sukanya chose the 59th Melakarta, Dharmavati for the raga-tana-pallavi suite. This raga is akin to the melodic minor scale of Western Classical music with the fourth note (Madhyama) being sharp. Many might not be aware that Sister John, who teaches Western music in Good Shepard Convent is adept in Carnataka music as well. She had rendered Dharmavati on the piano a few years ago. Sukanya's treatment of the raga reminded me of arpeggio movements in the alapana and the staccato note phrases in the pulsating tana portion. The Pallavi line Bharati Ganabharati, Sangeta Sahita Kalavathi, had been coined by her for the occasion, probably a tribute to the organisation, which has promoted her throughout, as if she is a daughter of Ganabharathi, as its President G.L.N. Ayya so charmingly put it.

The 200-minute concert rose to great heights with the co-artistes giving of their best. Violinist H.K. Narasimha Murthy's rendering of 'Sama', his embellishments with intricate lacework in the vocalist held the notes in Swara Dharmavati and Ramanujam's soft strokes on the mridanga were sheer artistry.

□

## The Muse and the Milieu

—S.N. Sivaswamy

I must have heard the lively, vibrant music of Alathur Brothers umpteen times, often walking miles from home to a concert hall and back. But the most enjoyable occasions were when they sang to open-air audiences. This used to happen either in an improvised dais in some playground, or in the forecourt of a temple, but always to a sprawling audience.

The temple concerts, of course, were free of entrance charge, the only expenditure we might incur being the coin of some small denomination we dropped in the 'arathi' tray.

A few of these open-air concerts are evergreen in my memory. One was in an old Shiva Temple in Ticurhirapalli and another in a Vinayaka temple in Madras situated right opposite to our house, while the third and fourth were during Ramanavami Celebrations in Bangalore, in the Ramaseva Maadali at the City Institute compound and in the Seshadripuram High School respectively.

On all these occasions I felt the fresh green surroundings provided an ethereal backdrop for the inspired singing of Alathur Brothers. The concert I heard at the Seshadripuram High School particular was superb.

Once, I had come to possess a ramshackle little car of

uncertain model, but being a tourist, its top could be rolled back so that the occupants could enjoy the cool breeze and also have a better view of the surroundings.

From Basavanagudi, I used to drive my family to the open air concerts held regularly in the City Institute and in the play field of Seshadripuram High School where the open spaces had still not attracted the attention of estate developers.

Alathur Sivasubramanya Iyer and Alathur Srinivasa Iyer were among our favourite musicians of those times. Their combination was a matter of wonder to us. Sivasubramanya had a rich reverberating voice which thundered across the gathering while Srinivasa Iyer's voice was much thinner. But he was the architect providing the plan for the step-by-step delineation of the Kritis and the Kalpanaswara structure. It was only when they sang the Ragalapana, or the Swara singly in turn, when we became aware of the vast difference in their timbre. When they sang the Keertana or the Swara together they blended perfectly to produce the most melodious outpouring of a pair of highly dedicated and practised singers.

Of all the sittings featuring Alathur Brothers we attended, the one that captivated us and has left a lasting imprint on our imagination was the one

held during Ramanavami, sometime in the fifties, at Seshadripuram School across.

Alathur Brothers were in great form that day. There was not a single false note nor a dull moment in the three-hour long recital. Although I have always been regaled by Alathur Brothers by their sculpted renderings of several Thyagaraja Kritis, I must count three of them as gems, viz., "Entora" in Harikamhoji, "Rama Neesamanamevari" in Kharaharapriya and "Koluvaivunnade" in Bhairavi. Their 'Koluvaivunnade' at Seshadripuram High School that day was unforgettable and I think what made it memorable were the two great accompanists, Mysore T. Chowdiah and Palghat Mani Iyer, whose contributions to the grandeur of the recital was as important as that of the vocalist duo. The alapana, the majestic stride of the composition, the sangatis, neraval at "Manasu Rajilla" and the uniquely patterned swaraprastara heard under the canopy of the star-studded firmament are still ringing in my ears. I have heard this immortal song sung perfectly by many great artistes, but the recital that day in Seshadripuram was unmatched for its overall effect.

## A Memorable Music Conference

The curtains came down for the last time in the millennium on the Music Conference of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja on October 31, with all the grandeur and gaiety of a festival. As usual, the week-long thirty-first conference of the 95-year-old Sabha featured academic discussions in the mornings and music recitals in the evening, well-known scholars and artistes in either case adding to their significance.

A notable feature of the meet this year was a record turnout in the academic sessions. Apparently, the President-elect who is an erudite scholar had aroused this unprecedented interest in the fraternity.

And one dare say that the audience was not disappointed, the President's introductory and concluding remarks day



S. Krishnamurthy receiving the Birudu Patra (Sangeeta Kalarathna)

after day being so homely, so full of information and replete with nostalgic anecdotes that added spice and substance to the day's demonstration.

The subjects discussed in these sessions were nothing new. They in fact, constitute the very structure of Carnatic music. But the experts who demonstrated in each case

went about their task in such a studied and scholarly way that it sustained audience interest. The theme of the conference was "Structural Variety of Carnatic Classical Music", the session itself inaugurated by no less a maestro than R.K. Srikantan.

The speakers on this interesting topic included R.N. Srilatha (Geethe & Lakshana Geethe), Padma Gurudatt (Swarajathi & Jathiswara), R.K. Padmanabha (Varna Praheda), R.K. Srikantan (Kriti and Keerthana—Significance of Sangathis), S. Shankar (Compositions in Nishadanta ragas), Sukanya Prabhakar (Pada & Javali), D. Balakrishna (Thillana, Tarana & Daru), Bangalore K. Venkataram (Pallavi Vinyasa—a historical perspective), Shakuntala Narasimhan (Influence of Hindustani music on Carnatic compositions), T.S. Sathyavathi



Inauguration of music conference





View of the concert

(Geetha Natakagulu), M.S. Sheela (presentation of "Deepa Lakshmi", an opera of Pu Thi Na, directed by S. Krishnamurthy) and H.P. Ramachar (Koanaku—Origin, Growth and Development). A symposium on "Role of Language in Classical Music" in which N.S. Krishnamurthy and T.N. Padmanabhan took part rounded off the series. B.V.K. Shastri chaired the Seminar.

The concert sessions featured popular artistes both local and from outside, a Hindustani vocal recital by Vinayak M. Torvi being an added attraction especially for the buffs in that style.

The mantle of conference President this year had devolved on one who is by no means a performing artiste. Yet there are few who could lay a better claim to the august position. He is a virtuoso, verily a musicians' musician.

He is S. Krishnamurthy, a distinguished retired Station Director of All India Radio.

During his career as a broadcaster spanning over 30 years, he presided not only over a rich variety of radio programmes, but himself wrote and produced several musicals, three of which won the first prize in the Annual Akashvani Awards for excellence. A record not equalled even to this day.

After retirement, his services were drafted by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. As the Production Executive of the local centre, S.K.M., as he is referred to in musical circles,

organised a number of workshops on aspects of music which proved popular and useful to students and professionals alike. Likewise, a series of cassettes S.K.M. produced on a variety of musical and religious verses have won the approbation of both the musical and religious minded individuals. Needless to say that many of them have seen more than one edition.

Music for S.K.M. is an inheritance. A grandson of the revered musician-composer Mysore Vasudevacharya, music runs in his veins and he enriched his musical expertise by liberally drawing on the other prevalent systems like the Hindustani and the Western variations, the latter with a view to assist the late Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar in reducing his renowned compositions to Indian notation. Even today, there are not many who can interpret the compositions of Vasudevacharya and the late Maharaja more authentically than S.K.M.



Vidushi Sudha Raghunathan in concert

Only recently, S.K.M. rendered yeoman service in the world of Carnatic music by cassetting the famed entire lot of his grandfather's works, popular vocalist R.K. Paulmanabha co-ordinating with him in this commendable labour of love. They are actually 20 in number, each rendered by a seasoned vocalist under S.K.M.'s direction. A compendium in book form providing the lyrics, notated carefully enhances the value of this monumental work.

S.K.M. was initiated into music almost at the same time as he was learning the alphabet. Even as he was in school his Jalatarang playing had attracted the attention of the Maharaja and the other artistes in the Palace. In fact,

it used to be a duet, his brother S. Jayaram, also a retired AIR official who is presently the Principal of the famed Kalakshetra, Madras, being the other player. The Maharaja who was impressed by S.K.M.'s artistry had made him a member of the Palace Orchestra, perhaps the youngest in a troupe that consisted of some of the veterans of the time.

Another area where S.K.M. has made a mark is the films. He has won plaudits for his music direction in a couple of Kannada films. Of far greater significance is as an author. Besides his book "Sangeeta Sarita" wherein by way of letters to his daughter, uses interesting anecdotes to impart salient features in Carnatic music. It has been

well received by both the artistes and the literati. Equally worthy is his rendition of his grandfather's classic "Naa Kanda Kalavidaru" in English. These fine books and his frequent write-ups in music in both English and Kannada dailies locally have carved for him a niche in the literary world.

No wonder that Krishnamurthy with his scholarship and experience in the field should have attracted a number of honours, including the Sangreeta-Nruthya Academy award. Now by virtue of having presided over the Gayana Samaja annual, he has added one more to the list—Sangeeta Kalaratna. Well done, keep it up S.K.M.

## Artistes of the Year

As in the past, a few dignitaries were honoured as "Artistes of the Year" in the Sadas on the concluding day of the conference. They are:



B.N. Sreenivasan

**B.N. Sreenivasan**, a disciple of the famed Chikka Ramu Rao is a graded artiste in Akashavani, besides

having been its staff artiste from 1965 to 79. He is a popular music teacher.



R.P. Indira Devi

**R.P. Indira Devi**, a disciple of G. Chennamma is well-versed in vocal, harmonium and veena. Wife of

R.V. Prabhakar Rao, former Vice-President of the Gayana Samaja, she was giving concerts till recently. She teaches veena and vocal to a few select aspirants.



Mathur Krishnamurthy

**Mathur Krishnamurthy** is known for his profound

knowledge of Indian mythology and vedic lore. A linguist, he has to his credit many books in English and Kannada, some translations from Tamil and Hindi. Though started career as a journalist, he has dedicated his services to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.



C. Aswath

**C. Aswath** is a budding Sugam Sangeet artiste, his lyrical vocalism extending from the theatre to films. A retired Executive Engineer of PFI, he has made a mark as a composer of music, his score lending dignified aura to productions like Tugalakh, Nagamandala, Raktakshi, to name only a few.

**G.V. Neela**, Principal of the 40-year old Sri Rama Lalithakala Academy is an accomplished musician, well-versed in a number of instruments besides vocal. She together with her equally competent sister Ranganayakamma has been a successful performer. She has been honoured by several



G.V. Neela

organisations, including Mahila Samaja, Devagiri Brahmana Sabha, Hebbar Srivaishnava Sabha and the Rotary.

**Dr. S.C. Sharma**, has distinguished himself as a teacher and researcher in engineering, has his links with music too. His research on the effects of choice melodies on the nerves of labourers toiling



Dr. S.C. Sharma

on machines has paid rewarding results. They have not only proved soothing, but enthused the workers in their work. Sharma is the recipient of many awards, "Samajaseva Dhurina" of Shularam Trust and awards of the State Sahitya and Sangeet-Nruthya Academy awards.



T.S. Parthasarathy

**T.S. Parthasarathy** of Madras is known for his deep involvement in the Lakshya and Lakshana aspects of Carnatic music. Though started career as a journalist, he soon joined the Indian Railways, serving in several regions. His studies of literature and music in those places resulted in a number of publications of inestimable value to students of music. He is as well-known as an organiser, his tenure as the Secretary of the Music Academy, Madras, has been significant in more than one way.

Atreya

## From Traditional to The Modern

July witnessed an extremely innovative dance and movement workshop in Dallas, U.S.A.

Organized by the Indian Cultural Heritage Foundation, this year's guest teacher and choreographer was Guru Maya Rao, the world-renowned Kathak dancer and choreographer, winner of innumerable national and international awards for her contribution to the world of dance. She is the founder and director of the Natya Institute of Kathak and Choreography (NIKC), Bangalore, the only institute in India to award degrees in choreography. Maya has trained hundreds of dancers all over the world, and

has led the NIKC performing unit to over 28 countries worldwide. As a choreographer of outstanding merit, she has choreographed over one hundred productions, and has also been invited to the USSR twice as a consultant choreographer for the Soviet Productions of the ballets *Shakuntala* and *Ramayana*.

Maya was invited to the International Ballet Competition as Guest of Honor and as a member of the Jury. She has been invited to Germany and other European countries to participate in seminars on Ballet and Choreography as well.

Maya has conducted many

workshops in Kathak, has designed choreography for many cultural organizations, and has presented her performing unit here in the United States.

Maya was assisted by her daughter, Madhu Nataraj, a young Kathak and contemporary dancer/choreographer, who received dance training at the NIKC and was initiated into modern dance by Sara Pearson and has trained with Karen Potter, of the Jose Limon Dance Foundation in New York. Madhu has performed to appreciative audiences in India, U.A.E., United States, and Europe.

### THE WORKSHOP

Revathi Satya, Director of the Arathi School of Dance, Dallas, along with Suma Kulkarni, Director of ICHF, came together to introduce young dance enthusiasts to the rich dance heritage of India. Maya Rao conducted this workshop in two stages. In the first, dancers were oriented to the motifs of various folk dances and Kathak, and in the second, dance pieces were choreographed to be presented in the month of October to all art-lovers in Texas and other parts of the U.S. in the near future.

What made this endeavor unique were the lesser-known, but equally vibrant and colorful dances: the Velakalli



*On Innovative journey Maya Rao, Madhu Nataraj*

(the martial form of Kerala), the Kutchi-Ghodli (of Rajasthan), Karaga (a ritualistic form of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu), the Mayan tribal dance of Madhya Pradesh), Dhimsa (the fertility dance of Andhra Pradesh), Naga (dance of the headhunters of Nagaland), Kallika (an almost extinct operatic dance form of Karnataka), and many more.

Maya is verily an authority on the subject of dance, having to her credit the distinction of authoring many articles on Kathak and other dances of India, which she has researched thoroughly, drawing from the anthropological, social, and

cultural diversities.

## CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP

Madhu Nataraj conducted a special workshop for children of the Arathi School of Dance, recognizing the need for dance education to realize their talent and potential. They were introduced to various movements from the Indian traditional dance forms, yoga, martial arts, and contemporary dance techniques.

Madhu choreographed two pieces designed for children. The first called *The Cosmic Dancer*, is a modern interpretation of an ancient sloka in praise of Lord Shiva. The second is based on an environmental theme of the Chipko Movement (founded by

the famous environmentalist, Sunderlal Bahuguna), where hundreds of tribal people lost their lives protecting trees in the state of Rajasthan.

Needless to say, these workshops were popular and gave an insight to our younger population about new dimensions in dance, and how they could assimilate them in their dance repertoire. This was a journey from the traditional to the modern. ICHF hopes to present all these sequences as outreach programs at various schools and universities and also as full-fledged dancer performances at cultural centers in the United States.

FAC

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## Yuva Sangeetotsav : In More Bright Talent

—Shruti Nanavaty

A weekend devoted to young musicians, who with their talents won the hearts of their listeners. The Devnandan Ubhayaker Yuva Sangeetotsav achieved yet another well organised fete by presenting the music of the youth. In its 13-year history, this prestigious festival has featured almost every young musician who has proudly carried down the lineage of his famous Guru and ancestor.

The Yuva Sangeetotsav is an annual event held under the aegis of Smriti Nandan, in loving memory of the young Devnandan Ubhayaker. Today, Sangeetotsav has steadily grown, reaching a commendable landmark, a prestigious platform for aspiring young musicians.

This year, also the last in the millennium, the Sangeetotsav was inaugurated



Nishia Tambe

by veteran vocalist Padmabhusan Gangubai Hangaal and presided over by A.R. Chandrasekhar Gupta. The three sessions (two concerts each) spread over the weekend of August 22 and 23, 1999, featuring 14 musicians including the accompanists.

The first session commenced on a different note with a Trio in Carnatic style.



H.K. Venkatram

Artistes H.K. Venkatram on violin, Ravi Kiran G. on Venu and A. Ashwin playing the Veena together making the audience experience the blend



Abhijet Shenoy

of the V-Trio. They played a few popular melodies such as *Teliyolern Rama*, *Somana Revarn*, etc.

The second concert that evening was a Hindustani vocal featuring Padma Talwalkar's student Yashaswi Sathé, a young girl in her late teens. She chose Kedar for anset elaboration, rendering a *Bada khyal* with *hadhat* followed by a swift *Drut Teental*. This was followed by a couple of compositions in Basant. Yashaswi rounded off her concert with a 'Thumri in the evergreen melody Des.



Abhijith Shenoy K.

Come Sunday morning, the first concert was a Hindustani vocal by young Abhijith Shenoy, a student of veteran Pt. D.B. Harindra. Abhijith presented Ahir Bhairavi, rendering a *Vilambit Ektal*, followed by a *Drut Teental* and a *Torana*. This was followed by a *Madhyalay Ektal 'Naachat Shiva'* in Parameshwari. He concluded with a bhajan in the lesser known Komal Durga.

Abhijith was accompanied on the Tabala by his younger brother Adarsh Shenoy. They were incidently the youngest artistes to be featured this year. While Abhijith is gifted with a rich, mature voice, Adarsh is a talented Tabala student of S.N. Gackwad. The harmonium accompaniment was provided by Ravindra Katoti of Belgaum, who pleased the rasikas with his short intricate passages.

This was followed by a Sitar recital by Nishita Gandhi Tamhe who for a decade trained under the well known Late P.B. Del Burman. After his demise, she has been receiving training from Pt. Arvind Parikh, the foremost pupil of Ustad Vilayat Khan Sahib.

Nishita selected Gurjari Todi for a detailed *Aalaap-Jod* followed by an *Ulla Jhala*. She played a *vilambit gat* in *Teental* followed by *drut Teental*, rounding it off with a quick *Jhala*. This was followed by Shudh Sarang where she presented another *Vilambit gat* and a *Drut teental*. To conclude, she played a beautiful *Dhun* composed by Ustad Inayat Khan in Mishra Peelu set to *Keherwa*. She was ably supported on the tabala by Gopal Krishna Hegde.

The evening session, also the last presented first a unique concert featuring a young Sarangi exponent, Ameeruddin Khan, who learnt the art from Ustad Ramzan Khan and now training under Kishori Parikh and Pt. Arvind Parikh. The Sarangi as we all know is a difficult instrument and almost a dying art. It was

indeed a treat to enjoy the unique music that emanates from a Sarangi. Young Ameer Khan played very competently and melodiously. He elaborated Yaman through four compositions and concluded with a Rajasthani Mand.

The Yuva Sangeetotsav concluded on a pompous note with a vocal concert by Kaushiki Chakrabarty, daughter and disciple of Pt. Ajay Chakrabarty. Kaushiki is one of the promising youths who has worked hard to follow in her famous father's footsteps. She rendered a variety of bandishes in Megh, with flavour, commencing with a *Vilambit Ektal 'Aakhi re Vrahini Ke'*, followed by a *Jhap Tal 'Garaje Ghata Ghan'*, a couple of *Drut Teentals*. She then surprised her listeners by rendering a Tillana that she had learnt from the legendary Dr. M. Balmuralikrishna, in Kalyani where she also indulged in making a *ragamalika* of *sargam*. The lighter items comprised of a Dadra in Mishra Peelu *'Bodariya Jhar Jhar'* and a bhajan in Bhairavi composed by Late Gyan Prakash Ghosh. She was well supported on Tabala by Udayraj Karpur and Harmonium by Ravindra Katoti.

The weekend festival at the Guru Nanak Bhavan was quite well attended. More and more sahhas should make an attempt to organise youth festivals, not only to encourage upcoming artistes but to bring out better quality music to the listener from a country which is brimming with music talent.

## Harindra : Creativity Personified

Pandit harindra has just completed 75 years of age, phoenix wishes many happy returns to this senior vocalist by way of this interview by **SHRUTI NANAVALY**

India is blessed and brimming with many musicians. Some have reached the zenith of fame and glory, while some have remained all their lives as hidden gems. Pt. D.B. Harindra is one such

hidden GEM. Soon turning 75 years old, he still has his musical glow in high spirits. Even today he believes that creativity is the basis for one's growth and glow in music.

Pandit Harindra was born at Harihar (Chitradurga District), on June 6, 1924. He is the son of the well-known lexicographer D.K. Bharadwaj. His love for music surfaced when he was barely 5 years old. The burning urge to sing persisted undimmed, made him go for this art.

Although he started in the Carnatic style under H.K. Sheshagiri Rao, who encouraged him to sing prayer songs for children's music, it was the Hindustani style that appealed more to Panditji. He found a willing guru in Pt. Shankara Sadashiva Joshi, from whom he took training from 1942 onwards. His learning was augmented by the guidance of Pandit Shankar Dixit Jantalli of Hubli, Pt. Narayan Rao of Hyderabad and Pt. Ramarao V. Naik during 1948 and 1958.

Apart from having been a regular on AIR-Bangalore for over three decades and performing for prestigious forms of Karnataka as well as being a successful teacher for over 30 years, Pt. Harindra's forte lies in the research and presentation of rare Ragas,



Pt. D.B. Harindra



winning him accolades from connoisseurs. Further, he has been an active musicologist, having presented papers and conducting *lecturams* at important conferences.

That is not all. He has also written innumerable articles and reviews for various journals. His outstanding contribution to music literature include an article in 'Bharatiya Kaladarshan' published by the State Sangeeta Nritya Academy, (1963), his extension lecture on Hindustani music published by Bangalore University and a paper on "The Role of Kannada in Hindustani music tomorrow" at World Kannada Meet, Mysore, in 1985.

Pandit Harindra has been associated with leading cultural organisations of Bangalore such as the Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, Hindustani Sangeeta Kalakra Mandali (founder-member) for



*At his nyaz*

decades. He has been an examiner for Hindustani music examinations of both the State Government and Gandharva Mahavidyalaya of Mumbai. He has served as a member of the Audition Board of Akashwani-Bangalore during 1992-1995.

#### **Awards and Honours :**

State Award-1985, Nadashree...1993, Hindustani

Sangeeta Kalakara Mandali, Karnataka Kala Tilak-1994 by Sangeeta Nritya Academy-Karnataka. Felicitations from organisations such as Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, Sangeeta Krupa Kuteera and recently by Bangalore Sangeeta Sabha in 1998.

**I would like to begin my tet-e-tet by asking if you look and characterise your initiation into music, what were the methods of training adopted during those crucial formative years of learning?**

First there was regularity. It was never a casual affair. Everyday there used to be lessons. Having a lesson everyday is important. In those years of learning, video culture was a must. It was insisted upon to be carried out in the early hours of the day since in the morning the voice tends to be lower and that condition has to be exploited. Those who taught us had followed it themselves.



*In Concert*

## LONG SEARCH

**Since you did not come from a family of musicians, how difficult was it for you to find a guru?**

The search was on for a long time and somehow I found a good guru in Pt. Shankara Sadashiva Joshi, when I was about 15 years old. Earlier, I had the atmosphere of listening to classical items because of my father's association with Pt. Taranath. Due to this acquaintance, I had the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of music, which influenced me. Especially, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur's disc of *Raag Multani*. I appreciated it so much that I wanted to follow his style. My urge to sing increased day by day. Pt. Taranath had a great liking for my Guru and persuaded him to settle down in Bangalore. It was the most wonderful opportunity when Pt. S.S. Joshi started residing in a relative's house. It was ideal since we lived just next door to each other. Everyday he would come to our house at 4.30 a.m. and start my practice. From then on it was a rigorous training for 6 to 7 years non-stop. What was rare about him is his open-mindedness. He himself advised me to listen to a variety of musicians of high calibre and try to imbibe their good qualities. This is a rare thing among artistes.

## STALWARTS ALL

**Would you like to talk about your interaction with the several music legends you**

**have been with? And the important things you learnt from them?**

Yes, I have had a lot to learn from stalwarts like Bhimsen Joshi, Basavaraj Rajguru and Mallikarjuna Mansur. Their way of singing and method of presentation thought in different styles, impressed me. I had the capacity to take things that were relevant to music and not just blind imitation.

Though Joshi did not have a convenient voice, he had developed it with rigorous practice. That I liked. And though he was from Kirana Gharana, he was the most robust singer which attracted me. His will power is tremendous.

The *Sadhana* in the case of Mallikarjuna Mansur was amazing. His *Laykari* was astounding. At any point of his rendition of a Raag, the *Laya* was never ignored. It used to just swing. His music used to be so lively.

## INNOVATIVE RAJGURU

And Rajguru's innovative methods were remarkable. Along with the usual elements, he would present certain things which were very novel to the field of music and acceptable. His music was very attractive, very venturesome.

**That way Sir, you yourself have been venturesome. What innovations have you tried in music?**

I always think that there are many many possibilities still not explored fully. Therefore, I look at a Raag as not being sung completely and still having the scope for further exploration. Even when I practice or teach, it shall not be the same everytime, to every student, at every concert. Because at one sitting or even in a few sittings it is not possible to reveal every aspect of a Raag. Sometimes it appears as though the new possibilities make us drift. But we must realise that it actually is making us grow. I constantly try and strive to search out to these possibilities and phrases of a Raag.

It should be convincing too. It is not advisable to merely introduce a new idea. That idea should fit into the Raag and come naturally. I have been doing this and shall continue it as a non-stop venture.

**You have been teaching music to deserving students for over three decades now. How does teaching help the teacher?**

Yes, teaching makes an artiste more responsible than a performer. Somehow a performer can get away with his follies since after the concert, he is very rarely and hardly questioned about it. Whereas, a teacher is all the time answerable to his students and through students he is answerable to the people. Hence teaching is a very helpful medium to grow in music because one is constantly having that urge to give something new.

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**What are your views about studying Music Theory? How helpful is it for a performing artiste?**

I think one would see reason for whatever one does in music if one knows the Theory. Theory is not based on somebody's thinking. It is an analytical review of what has been done through the ages. And that analysis holds good for all times. It is based on the nature of a Raag and not somebody's fancy to prescribe something about Raag. It is an important aspect of training to improve one's knowledge and performing ability and also for proper thinking of a Raag. One learns about the limitations of the Raags as well as their greater possibilities through theory. But I would say that one should also not become too theoretical, because when we go by prescription, we limit ourselves so far as the rendition of a Raag is concerned. One should not have the attitude that there is nothing beyond what has been done so far.

## **NOT FOR ALL**

**What is your opinion on the classical music today? Do you feel classical music is losing out in appeal to other forms?**

No, it is not. Only those who want to be in the limelight may try to begin with classical music and finding it difficult to acquire limelight as early as they want to, may therefore recede from the step they have taken. But there is definitely

scope. Those who realise in time, shall get back to classical music. They would know the worth of it. Besides, with classical base, light music is not that difficult to achieve. It is a precursor for other forms. I agree to what Hariharan, the Ghazal singer who also sings for films, has said: "Classical background gives scope for creativity. Otherwise singing ghazals and other light items amounts to beating about the bush!" How meaningful!

**According to you, what is it that a performer is required to do today? What qualities should his or her performance consist of?**

A performer should maintain a good health basically. Health is very important. One should be guarded against bad food habits, etc. In performing as such, I very much appreciate a performer who does away with mannerisms. For that he should cultivate his Sadhana in such a way that he is free from mannerisms. It is easy to avoid them if one is conscious about them. Also he has to maintain a pleasant look and make it pleasing. In music, an artiste should be well informed about the Raagas he presents. This is important. There should always be a keenness to present something new about the Raag. He should see to it that it is not a repetition of what he sang and explored in his earlier concerts. It should be fresh. The audience must not be taken for granted and

one should be aware that amongst them sit persons knowledgeable enough to question him. What really matters is the subtleties. They should not be ignored. I find many overlooking them today. The music must be enriched with subtleties in the form of right modulation, the Bhava aspect dominating.

**Coming to today's audience. Do you find them receptive enough?**

I think knowledgeable audiences are quite helpful though the number may not be as encouraging as in the past. Having listened to a number of maestros, they had that receptivity in abundance. It was such, that if a performer succeeded in pleasing them, his aim was considered to have been achieved. The present-day audiences are quite restive. Initially, they are for sometime calm enough, but soon they are eager to get back. It is not their fault. The time of the concerts is also such. I feel the overnight concerts are very helpful and better to make a good listener even better or best. This I think is useful.

## **ENVIRONMENT FACTOR**

**Are good musicians born or made?**

Both are true. The environment factor should not be ignored. Even if a person is not a musician by birth, the environment through which he comes through, makes him

develop that capability. And a horn musician, not necessarily may continue or be successful for want of encouragement, stimulus and proper environment. His inherent talent may die because of lack of a proper atmosphere.

**Now to some serious music issues....About Rung classification. They have been classified within 10 thaats. There is a general opinion of extending the number to 32. Are you in favour of this? Would you say the Raagaang system is good enough?**

Raagaang or Thaat system, both are good enough. But Raagaang system has been helpful to understand the limitation of a raag or its formation, for proper analysis of a raag. That is what Ang it includes and its relationship with other raags, etc., are included. But even this has its own limitations because only the raagaang of certain raags can be considered and not all. Eg. Sarang Ang, Des Ang, Khamaj Ang, etc. But there are raags that don't have any Ang to be mentioned in the course of rendering it. Therefore they are different from the Angs which we have come to know so far.

The Thaat system could be improved by adopting more Thaats that are relevant. For that there are so many Thaats called Melas in Carnatic Music which could be adopted. They are quite useful and could make our system more

meaningful. The name is not that important because the Thaat gives the content and one need is met. An attempt should be seriously made by persons who are considered as authority in music. I wonder why they have not taken the initiative yet.

**Could you specify and give examples about adopting Melas from Carnatic music? Is it really possible?**

Yes, why not? There are many raags that are similar to Carnatic raags, only names are different. It is not wrong to adopt Melas from Carnatic music. For example Madhuvanti has been put under Todi Thaat, where it doesn't fit right. Instead, it could better go under Dharmavati Mela. Likewise, Ahir Bhairav could come under Chakravaka Mela instead of Bhairav Thaat. When we have adopted Raags like Hamsadhwani, Charnukeshi, Abhogi without changing their names, why shouldn't we do the same in the case of Thaats or Melas?

**To what extent is it important to sing Rungs according to their Pruhuras?**

See, It is helpful for the performer to sing a Raag at the given time because that time is considered, congenial for the rendition. But this has not been possible due to the concert timings which are quite unusual and not helpful enough for rendering.

**But then what does one do when one is singing for a recording?**

They are helplessly doing it and try to build a mental atmosphere not which is not easy to achieve. They keep their state of mind in such a way as to feel it is morning or evening, etc. If the performer is mature and efficient, it will not affect his music despite the time since he mentally creates an atmosphere for himself. It is possible. Only one has to be quite serious about his mental state and rendition of relevant Raagas. Thus Raags should be sung according to time. The theme: 'Raga, Rasa, Samaya' holds good in this context and should be borne in mind. The Rasa flows so naturally if the Raag is sung at the right time. Rasa is important and has to be looked into. The performer should mind the Rasa aspect of a Raag.

**Your reputation as a musician is that you always sing more rare Raags such as Lalitkuli, Komal Durga, etc. Would you like to comment?**

First of all, why do people call some Raags rare? Were not the present Raags rare earlier? So why hesitate to going for the Raags afresh, only with the idea of making them common. Why call them rare? The fact that certain Raags remain and continue to be rare is due to lack of interest on the part of the musician himself. Trying such Raags is no offence. Is it essential to protect rare Raags

from exposure? Should they remain as untouchables forever?!! The customary Raags were also rare at a point of time. Yet they were made customary though they happened to be rare in the beginning. So also the so-called rare Raags could be made customary ones, if one minds to cultivate them and make them popular. Popularity as such will in turn make them common. Someone has to do it. If more and more musicians attempt it, they are welcome.

**So you are one of them; who not try to make these Raags known?**

Yes, yes. Because no Raag is outside the context of the Saptaswaras. As long as a Raag is within these seven notes, then why differentiate as rare or common? Therefore, when attempting a less heard Raag, before performing, one could give a brief explanation about it. By doing so, it will no longer appear rare. I do that and feel it is important to do so.

**What have you to say for those who perform only a limited number of Raags?**

Yes, I would give the title as, 'A set of Raags for each artiste for life'. I have come across such musicians who have been adherent to a set of Raags for a long period and not changing it even now. And this goes on to the extent of not being bothered about a concert presentation since they are forever ready. Therefore all the

items they present of a Raag, they come in order of what they have learnt earlier and thus find it easy to get through concerts. They do not go beyond those few Raags. Also, even those limited Raags could be considered in a new light. Something different. It is not wrong to stick to a set of Raags, but making the Raag richer and richer after every performance is essential.

**The world of music has been your home for more than six decades. What has music come to mean to you?**

Music is an inseparable partner of life. And if a musician is sincere, music will not disappoint him. Music keeps me lit, both mentally and physically. I'm still having those benefits from it and hope to have it till the end.

**What would you say are your achievements, on reviewing your life now?**

Though I happened to be a science teacher, it became only a part of my living to earn a livelihood and nothing beyond. But music as such keeps me so lively and I do not want music to be looked upon in less respect. Music deserves all the respect. It commands respect throughout. And having respected music, music has respected me. Moreover, I have pleasure in teaching students who are quite eager to know and do Sadhana and achieve something extraordinary. It is a pleasure to teach such students. I think this sustains

my music. Through music I've lived a complete beautiful life. I would say Music itself is an achievement for me.

**About Music and Spirituality. Where does Spirituality lie? What is your opinion about Music Vs Spirituality?**

My answer is: Music by itself does not contain any spiritual element. To achieve 'realisation', one needs to go through high level of aesthetic experience. I would like to quote the words of Chidanand Nagarkar, who was a genius of a musician who died young. "We need not mistake bhajans, Vedic hymns, songs of Church, etc., for forms of art having any spiritual value. It is the word content of a song that becomes more important than the 'musical content'. As such it is the words, if properly followed and understood, that are of spiritual value".

So what is that factor which is spiritual in music and which can be experienced independent of songs? The realisation of the ultimate reality through the physical senses that we conceive the same reality as Beauty, is to what music belongs. Chidanand has further said that "Music by itself is of no spiritual value, but only a means to an end. The end is not the music but the realisation of the reality, i.e., beauty. Thus the trance we go into while listening to music is an aesthetic experience and not a spiritual one." □

## Youngsters to the Fore in Krishnotsava

The annual Krishnotsavam festival of budding musicians organised by the Percussion Arts Centre, featured six young artistes this year. The five-day festival under the joint auspices of the Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs, was inaugurated by Mr. Justice Nittoor Srinivasa Rao, on September 2. Vocalist R.K. Padmanabha and Percussionist Bangalore K. Venkatarao spoke on the occasion.

A flute recital of Chandan Kumar, the great grandson of Mysore T. Chowdiah followed the inauguration. Chandan Kumar chose Bilahari (Smarasudha—Swati Tirunal) and Madhyamavati (Raga,

Tana, Pallavi—Misra Janti) for elaboration. His impressive blowing technique coupled with an immaculate sruthi sense, rich manodharma and a keen sense of laya enhanced the classicity of the concert. A.V. Sathyanarayana on violin showed good anticipation and manodharma while G. Raghava on mridanga impressed with dexterity of strokes. S. Sethumadhavan lent meaningful khandava support.

Vidushi R. Chandrika, an AIR staff artiste, gave a delectable vocal recital, aptly dominated by songs on Lord Krishna. Her rendition of Hindola (Saamaja Varagamana) and Kalyani (Pankaja Lochana—Misra

Chapu) left a lasting impression on the audience. S. Yashasvi provided tuneful support on violin, while N. Vasudeva provided rich mridangam support. A. Somashekar on the ghatam made the laya vinyasa interesting.

Ashwin, a disciple of Vidwan H.V. Krishna Murthy, provided an enjoyable veena recital, a lovely blend of aesthetics and vyavahara. Reetigowla (Paripalayamani) and Varali (Mamava Meenakshi) were disposed of with aplomb. The main item of the day, an alapana of Khamboji (Evani Mata) will be remembered for long, for its depth and the nuances. B.S. Anand's mridanga enhanced the beauty of the veena playing, while P. Srinivasa Murthy proved an ideal foil on ghatam.

Padma Sandilan of Chennai, a disciple of Dr. Semmangudi, P.S. Narayanaswamy and K.V. Narayanaswamy gave a vocal recital that stood out for deep classicism and a rich paatanthara. Her rendition of Poorvikalyani (Deva Deva Jagadeeshwara—Swati Tirunal), Shankarabharana (Pogadirela Ranga), Thodi (Raga, Tana, Pallavi—Adi) demonstrated her prowess and musical depth. V. Srikanth's violin support was brilliant and showed that he is a star in



KRISHNOTSAVA — Padma Sandilyan (Chennai) - Vocal V. Srikanth (Mysore) - Violin G.S. Ramanujam (Mysore) - Mridanga Dayananda Mohite - Ghatam

the making. G.S. Ramamujam on the mridangam used the gunki to good effect, while M. Dayananda Mohite's ghatam accompaniment was appropriated.

The curtains came down on the festival with a vocal recital by Balasubramanyam Sharma. Exhibiting a melodious voice and a sharp laya sense to good effect, Balasubramanyam Sharma gave an impressive rendition of Dharmavathi (Parabandhamavathi—Dikshitar—Rupaka) and Tholi (Sri Krishnam Bhaja—Dikshitar).

B. Raghuram's violin accompaniment stood out for zonal bowing and rich raga sense. T.S. Chandrasekhar's mridangam accompaniment was a mix of subtle accompaniment and brilliant vyavahara. B.R. Ravikumar's stirring strokes on the ghatam matched the depth of the mridangam play.

An interesting feature of this year's festival was the MUSIC QUIZ aimed at the audience, conducted towards the end of each concert with questions pertaining to the

music rendered till then. This was highly interactive, with interesting prizes and provided the audience with an impetus for keener listening to classical music. This was very well received.

The festival was sponsored by Vidushi Parvathy Krishnaswamy, Sri V. Krishnan, General Manager (Retd.) I.T.E., Vidwan R.K. Padmanabha, Sri V.C. Sreeram (Rukmini Charities), Vidwan Anur Ananthakrishna Sharma, Smt. P.S. Serthamma and Sri G.R. Ramachandra.

—F.A.C.

## OBITUARY

### K.P. Kittappa Pillai

The death on October 30 this year of Tanjavor K.P. Kittappa Pillai has made the world of Indian classical dancing the poorer. The doyen of Bharathanatyam was 87 and leaves his wife and three sons and a host of students to mourn.

Kittappa hailed from a distinguished family of artistes who were proficient both in music and dance. His father, the famous Ponnaiyah Pillai, was himself a most respected musician, having served on the teaching staff of the Annamalai Music University, Chidambaram, with distinction. Kittappa inherited the twin arts from his father who was known for his rendition in both like his ancestors the renowned Tanjavor Quartet. This famous quartet was the students of the well-known composer



Tanjavor K.P. Kittappa Pillai

Muthuswamy Dikshitar and the codifiers of the art of Bharathanatyam.

Hailing from such a reputed household Kittappa became the torch-bearer of that hallowed tradition. On the maternal side, the redoubtable Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai was his grandfather.

Thus Kittappa was the repository of some of the best-known compositions for music and dance. No wonder innumerable, serious-minded dancers like Vyjayanthimala, Hema Malini, Sudha Rani and our own Narmada and Padmini Rao became his prime students in dance. He was the patron of Padmini Rao's Ponnaiah Lalitha Kala Academy of Bangalore.

Though known as a Sangeetha Vaidyan Kittappa had become more popular as a teacher and a nattuvandiar of Bharathanatyam. It is in that capacity that he, together with his maternal uncle, the late Muthaiah Pillai, came to the city in the late fifties in response to requests of some aspiring dance students. Justifiably his services to the art were recognised by the State Government which invested him with the coveted State Award and the monthly honorarium. He was also the recipient of the State Sangeet-Nritya Academy Award.

Of greater significance are the distinctions of the title "Isai Pareravignner" conferred on him by the Tamil Nadu Government and the Award of the Central Sangeet Natak

Academy. Just before his demise, he was named for the prestigious Fellowship of the Central Akademy and the exalted Kalidas Samman. Alas, Kittappa did not live to receive these distinctions, one as highly deserved as the other by him. Indeed, it is a pity that institutions like them wait to confer such honours beyond a reasonable age of the concerned recipient. But there is no doubt that Kittappa was satisfied that we had trained a good band of students to carry the name and tradition of his family. It is gratifying to note that besides these worthy students, one of his sons Chinna Tanhi has also been trained by him to keep the artistic tradition alive in the family.

## A. Veerabhadraiah

A little earlier the popular, senior Violinist A. Veerabhadraiah passed away after a massive heart attack. He was the proprietor of Anna Musicals, the well-known makers of musical instruments. It was founded by the renowned harmonium artiste A. Arumachalappa.

Veerabhadraiah was a worthy son of his father not only as a dedicated artiste, but also known for his suave manners. As a violinist Veerabhadraiah was a graded artiste of AIR and Dourdarshan. Besides he was accomplished both as a soloist and an accompanist. He was also familiar as one of the violin trio, the other two being H.V. Krishnamurthy and the

late Anour Ramakrishna.

Known in closer circle as Annaiah, he was a student in violin of the popular Narayana Swamy Bhagavatar. Besides jointly founding the Vijaya Annaiah was a member of the State Sangeet Nritya Academy for more than one term. He had also served as Chairman and member of more than one panel for the selection of artistes for prestigious awards instituted by the State Government.

Annaiah also has the distinction of being one of the founders of the well-known Karnataka Ganakala Parishath, the sole organisation representing the musicians of the State. He was for a period the President of the

Parishath and at different points of time served the organisation in several other capacities. The Parishath had honoured him with the title "Sangeetha Bhushana," when he presided over one of its annual musicians conference. The State and the Academy had also honoured him with their respective awards.

Annaiah leaves his wife, a daughter and three sons, his son Kashinath being a popular Kanjira artiste. He together with his brother Mani are continuing the family profession of manufacturing musical instruments. The other brother Manjunath is a doctor by profession.

Phoenix extends its heartfelt condolences to the two bereaved families. □



## Veteran Vainika blazes in 'Indu Chakra'

—Kusuma Rao

**V**eteran R.K. Suryanarayana gave a fine verna recital at the Institute of World Culture on August 5, with percussion by the Udupa team. The concert was in memory of K. Raja Iyengar and R. Sarojamma.

Springing a surprise with the opening piece itself, R.K.S. played the well-known Bilahari Swarajati—'Raara Venn'. There was a happy fusion of the East and the West in the rendition, when he gave a harmonic base to the familiar swaras, producing exotic sounds. Invoking 'Varasiddhi Vinayaka' with a composition of his own in Kamakangi, the first raga of the Melahakra set to Rupaka Tala, he quizzed the audience while doing swaraprasthara with the other five ragas of the Indu Chakra, namely Ratnangi, Ganamurti, Manavati, Vinaspati and Tanaruppi. Confronted with unfamiliar ragas, the listeners were at a loss-feeling unsure. It was good that he introduced each piece in advance. Blazing new patterns and exploring new horizons has even been R.K.S.'s forte and this concert was proof of it.

Sree Raga which is reputed to bestow peace, health and prosperity, alap revealed the essence of the melody in all its majesty and serenity. What followed was not the expected

'Endaro,' but the brief 'Sree Varalakshmi' of Dikshitar. Brisk, well-knit swaras, cascading swara garlands fell on our ears like refreshing drops of rain on parched earth.

The Tani Avartanam which followed was an audio-visual treat, father and son drumming away to glory, young Girilhar often rising like a seesaw along with his ghataam, in his enthusiastic display of dexterity. He also recited konakkol for the different Jatis.

'Sarasamula' (Hindustani Kapi) preceded the Rngamalika tanam in Shivarajini. Khamach, Keelara and Varali. Weaving rounded, interesting, intriguing swara combinations of melody and technical virtuosity, RKS gave of his best in Tana and played a Tillana of his own in Shivarajini, before concluding with a short mangala in Madhyamavati.

### A Classical Fare :

Maruti Prasad, a differently added artiste sang for the Tyagaraja Gana Sabha on August 22, supported by K.V. Raja Iyengar on Violin B.S. Anand on Mridangam and Anrit on Khanjira.

It was a classical fare, sans gimmickry. Prasad ably assisted by his sidemen was able to establish the right musical atmosphere, right at



R K Suryanarayana

the beginning with the Saveri Varna 'Sarasada' which lasted right through the 3-hour concert.

He let the audience have a taste of his expertise in laya and tala, as well when he executed a daunting Pallavi—"Karana bharanam Bhaje Anand Kandam"—in Todi, set to Khanda Triputa, Tisra Naladi, with viloppu of 4 akasharas. The audience was receptive to his music and appreciated his choice of ragas and kritis. The evocative Alhagi, invoking 'Sri Madha Ganapati', 'Saraswati' in Saraswati were the opening pieces. A fairly elaborate alap in 'Kedara' and the famous Dikshitar composition 'Ananda Natana' was rendered tunelessly. 'Badakanakamaya' (Athana) and a couple of devaranamas brought the enjoyable concert to a close.

□

## Veteran Vainika Remembered

The Percussive Art Centre celebrated the Birth Centenary of Veena Venkatasubbaiah at Mysore on August 8. Veena Venkatasubbaiah was the grandson of veteran Veena Shamanna.

Deputy Mayor Smt. Venkata Lakshamma inaugurated an exhibition containing the centuries old Veena and Sarahath of Veena Shamanna parampara, rare photographs and old hand-written manuscripts, etc. The Mayor urged the family to retain Veena Shamanna's residence as a protected monument.

The programme commenced with a Nagaswara recital by N. Srinivas and N. Thyagaraja with Dolu accompaniment by N.V. Gururaja and M. Ramesh.

After invocation by Kumaris Revathi and Shubha, disciples of Vidushi H.S. Mahalakshmi, Bangalore K. Venkataram, Director of the Art Centre welcomed the gathering and explained the purpose of conducting the birth centenary of the great maestro in Mysore. Vidushi Padma Gurudutt read out messages sent by eminent artistes and described in brief the attainments of Veena Venkatasubbaiah. Dr. R. Satyanarayana released a book "Compositions of Mysore S. Rama Rao (Chikka Ramarao)" by Padma Gurudutt under her task of "Collection of Compositions of Mysore Composers".

Short music recitals formed part of the programme. A veena recital by M.R. Shashikanth with H.S. Sudheendra on Mridangam and a vocal recital

by Dr. R.N. Sreedatha with Veena Suresh on violin and 80 years old Smt. Kammamma of Mysore, daughter of Chikka Ramarao and the mother of noted Sugam Sangeetha Artists the late Mysore Ananthaswamy, rendered a composition of Chikka Ramarao.

### Lineage of Veena Venkatasubbaiah

Veena Venkatasubbaiah's grandfather Veena Shamanna (1828-1908) was the son of Asthana Vidwan Veena Ramahagavathar who hailed from Tanjore and came to Mysore in 1850. He was appointed Asthana Vidwan by Maharaja Mumtazi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. Apart from veena, he was proficient in violin, mridanga and the rare "Sarahath". The medal received by Shamanna in Madras in 1880 during a concert was exhibited.

Veena Venkatasubbaiah (1899-1961) was the son of Veena Ramanna, another son of Veena Seshanna. It is stated that Venkatasubbaiah played veena in his fifth year and got the appreciation of the Mysore Maharaja. In 1919 when he married Subhalakshamma of Kollegal hariharu Shastri, the couple were taken in a procession in the Palace Palanquin. Venkatasubbaiah served as a music teacher for 25 years in the Maharani's Training College, Mysore.

The residence of the erstwhile Veena Shamanna is now reported to be under sale and it is suggested that the old house be preserved as a monument to a great tradition.

-F.A.C.



8-8-99 at Percussive Art Centre: Dy Mayor of Mysore Venkata Lakshamma lighting the lamp on the occasion of the Birth Centenary of Veena Venkatasubbaiah in Mysore (Left-Right) Padma Gurudutt, Mayor, Dy. Mayor, Dr. R. Satyanarayana V. Balasubramanyan & V. Ramswamy

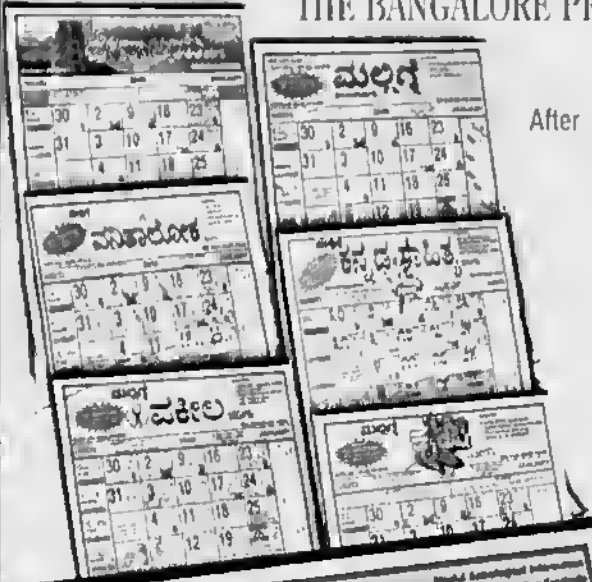
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